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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [OFDP](#) [UK](#) [VC](#) [XL](#)
SUBJECT: ST. VINCENT: A VIOLENT DEATH AND A DIPLOMAT'S
DEPARTURE ALTER THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

REF: A. BRIDGETOWN 425
[B](#). 05 BRIDGETOWN 1420
[C](#). 05 BRIDGETOWN 935

Classified By: DCM Mary Ellen T. Gilroy for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: The recent death of the top aide to St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves, together with the departure of a British diplomat who was among the PM's closest friends, has significantly changed the political landscape of this small country. The tragic murder in March of Press Secretary Glenn Jackson has deprived the Government of a key figure who counseled the PM on a variety of issues and was Post's best contact in St. Vincent. Similarly, the recent departure of the Resident British Commissioner has meant the loss of a close friend of the PM who provided Post with excellent insight into this regional leader. The role these two individuals played in St. Vincent's political establishment is indicative of the small island-states of the Eastern Caribbean and also instructive of the situation faced by Post in developing meaningful contacts in order to report to the Department on regional issues. End summary.

Murder of the PM's Top Aide

[2](#). (U) The brutal murder of the top aide to Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves has left the Government of St. Vincent and the ruling Unity Labor Party (ULP) bereft of one of its leading figures. Glenn Jackson, who served as Government Press Secretary and Personal Aide to the PM, was among Gonsalves's closest confidants, attending all Cabinet meetings and weighing in on important policy issues. He was also a key figure in the ruling ULP, helping the party defeat the long-governing New Democratic Party (NDP) in 2001 and win re-election in 2005. Jackson's body was found near his home in the capital, Kingstown, on March 6 (ref A). According to press reports, he died of a gunshot wound. Police have yet to identify a suspect or motive for the murder.

Journalist and Provocateur

[3](#). (U) Glenn Jackson was a divisive figure in St. Vincent, leading to speculation that his murder may not have been a random crime. A journalist by profession, Jackson rose to prominence in the 1990s as host of St. Vincent's first talk radio program. This platform allowed Jackson to use his

eloquence and passion to turn out hundreds of people for public demonstrations against what he saw as a variety of ills that plagued St. Vincent. Among these was a protest against the USG for its support of ending preferential trade quotas for Caribbean bananas. Similar demonstrations initiated by Jackson were directed against then Prime Minister James Mitchell and the ruling NDP, contributing to a political crisis that culminated in the 2001 elections that brought the opposition ULP and Ralph Gonsalves to power. Jackson followed Gonsalves into Government while continuing his role as radio host-provocateur, drawing the ire of many who believe he contributed negatively to the nation's hothouse political climate (refs B and C).

A Small Clique Close to the PM

14. (C) In Government, Glenn Jackson established himself as one of PM Gonsalves's most trusted associates and was given the official title Personal Aide in addition to Press Secretary. Jackson was among a handful of people that were

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close to Gonsalves in a Government full of political appointees and bureaucrats of questionable ability. This common quality of governments in the Eastern Caribbean has the effect of making already small governing institutions even smaller, so that decision-making and access to information are often concentrated in a small clique close to the prime minister. In St. Vincent, PM Gonsalves has taken this tendency to an extreme and nearly all Government initiatives are run directly from his office. As the PM's top aide, Glenn Jackson was, therefore, exceptionally knowledgeable. Post was particularly fortunate to identify Jackson's value and cultivate a relationship that made him our most important contact.

British Diplomat the PM's Pal

15. (C) Resident British Commissioner Terry Knight was another person close to Ralph Gonsalves who, by virtue of his unfettered access, could provide Post with valuable information regarding the PM and Vincentian politics. St. Vincent is a rather parochial place for a cosmopolitan figure such as Gonsalves, who appreciated socializing with the engaging British diplomat. Their relationship was furthered by the especially close bond that developed between Knight's and Gonsalves's Trinidadian-born spouses. Numerous family outings and weekend barbecues led to many candid discussions that offered Knight unique insight into what makes Gonsalves tick. Embossed meeting with the British diplomat were treated to recitations of what "Ralph said" on all manner of issues, which added to our understanding of the mercurial Gonsalves and his often contentious role in Caribbean politics.

U.K.'s Caribbean Downsizing

16. (C) Terry Knight proved himself to be one of Post's most valuable contacts in St. Vincent. While his personal relationship with Ralph Gonsalves made this situation exceptional, the Resident British Commissioners posted to the other islands in the Eastern Caribbean have also proved to be invaluable by virtue of both their knowledge of the countries in which they live and unfailing collegiality. Unfortunately, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office permanently removed their Resident Commissioners from St. Vincent and Grenada in December 2005 as part of a downsizing of staff. Currently, the U.K. has diplomats posted only to Antigua and St. Lucia in addition to the High Commission in Barbados. (Note: Terry Knight's new position is Resident Commissioner in Antigua, where it is unlikely, however, that he will become as close to Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer as

he did to Ralph Gonsalves. End note.)

The Trouble With Island Hopping

¶7. (C) Comment: While all reporting officers face the problems inherent in developing and maintaining contacts, the challenge is particularly acute in the Eastern Caribbean where Emboffs working out of Barbados can travel only infrequently to the other islands they cover. As a result, it can be difficult to identify and cultivate key contacts without regular interaction with members of the political establishment. Considering, however, the small size of the countries in the region, Emboffs can typically gather enough information during periodic visits to meet the Department's needs. In St. Vincent, in which interest is heightened because of Ralph Gonsalves's role as a perennial thorn in Washington's side and best friend of Cuba and Venezuela, Post was particularly fortunate to have among its contacts two individuals who could provide valuable insight on the PM and his small island-state. The departure of diplomat Terry Knight and aide Glenn Jackson's tragic death were setbacks that Post will overcome as we strive to continue producing quality reporting. End comment.
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